

STANDARDS

for Rangeland Health

and

GUIDELINES

for Livestock Grazing Management

on BLM-Administered Lands
in California and Northwestern Nevada

FINAL Environmental Impact Statement

Prepared by the Bureau of Land Management
California State Office
April 1998

ABSTRACT

Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management in California and NW Nevada

Environmental Impact Statement

Draft ()

Final (X)

United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

1. Type of Action: Administrative (X) Legislative ()

2. Abstract: This environmental impact statement (EIS) documents the effects of adopting regional standards for rangeland health and guidelines for livestock grazing management on BLM-administered lands in parts of California and NW Nevada. The Preferred Alternative described in the final EIS (Alternative 5) is the Proposed Action analyzed in the draft EIS (Alternative 1) with changes set forth in this document. The changes reflected in the Preferred Alternative are within the scope and analysis of the draft EIS, and do not alter the analysis of the environmental consequences. The changes reflected in the Preferred Alternative are a result of public comment and input from the three Resource Advisory Councils (RACs). Five alternatives are considered in the final EIS: The original RAC recommendations for regional standards and guidelines; the state-wide standards and regional guidelines; the fall-back standards and guidelines from the regulations; rapid improvement standards and guidelines; and a modified set of regional standards and guidelines.

This document contains most of the original draft EIS, with changes and corrections. It includes the following:

- a statement of the purpose and need for the action,
- a description of the alternatives, including the preferred alternative,
- a description of the affected environment,
- an analysis of environmental consequences,
- an analysis and response to public comments on the draft EIS, and
- other sections required by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations.

3. For further information contact:

James Morrison, Range Program Lead
BLM California State Office
2135 Butano Drive
Sacramento, CA 95825-0451
(916) 978-4642

SUMMARY

This is the Final Environmental Impact Statement for developing Rangeland Health Standards and Livestock Grazing Management Guidelines. The EIS describes the environmental impacts that would result from a number of alternatives for managing BLM-administered rangelands, including the actual proposed standards and guidelines for California and NW Nevada. This EIS was written to analyze a range of reasonable alternatives and to present the results of the environmental analysis in a form that can best inform the public and serve the need of the decision maker.

The final EIS was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). It is combined with and incorporates the draft EIS. The Preferred Alternative described in the final EIS (Alternative 5) is the Proposed Action analyzed in the draft EIS (Alternative 1) with changes based upon information and suggestions raised through public comment, Resource Advisory Council (RAC) input, and internal review.

Of the 649 allotments in the EIS area, 387 allotments are currently meeting the standards or making significant progress toward meeting the standards with current management practices.

59 Allotments were identified as being in Category 1 -- areas where one or more standards are not being met, or significant progress is not being made toward meeting the standard(s), and livestock grazing is a significant contributor to the problem. Some form of livestock management change will be made in those allotments, based upon site-specific needs. Appendix 21 contains a detailed listing of these allotments.

The most common types of change expected are in grazing systems and season of use, but there will also be some reductions in use and exclusions of portions of allotments from livestock use. A net reduction of approximately 12,000 livestock AUMs (about 3.5% of a total of 338,715 within the study area) is projected as a direct result of standard and guideline implementation.

190 allotments are in Category 3 -- areas where the status for one or more standards is not known, or the cause of the failure to meet the standard(s) is not known. These will be reviewed on a priority basis, as described in Appendix 21.

There were an additional 13 allotments in Category 4 -- areas where one or more standards are not being met due to some other resource use or problem than grazing. As priorities and funding allow, the authorized officers will take appropriate action based on regulation or policy to correct these situations.